

## CHURCH STUFF

(A newsletter for Catholic cadets)

Week of 29 September, 2002

To my brothers and sisters in the Corps:

When I read the following prayer, I thought I'd include it this week.

It says a lot about the potholes of life and how we fall into them.

It also talks about how to get out of the potholes, if we want to make the effort.

O ingenious God!

I rejoice in Your creation

and pray that Your Spirit may touch me so deeply

that I will find a SENSE OF SELF

which makes me glad to be who I am

and yet restless at being anything less than I can become.

Make me simple enough not to be confused by disappointment,

clear enough not to mistake busyness for freedom,

honest enough not to expect truth to be painless,

brave enough not to sing all my songs in private,

compassionate enough not to get in trouble,

humble enough to admit trouble and seek help,

joyful enough to celebrate all of it...

myself...and others...and You...

through the Lord Jesus who lived life to the fullest.

Amen!

May your days be blessed with peace, and may God walk you out of the potholes.

## THINGS CATHOLICS CAN DO:

### RETREATS

If you'd like to make a Catholic Retreat, there are two

Retreats coming up:

25-26-27 October:

Cadet Retreat at St. Basil's Academy

(across the River in Cold Spring);

more "traditional" Retreat with the USCC

Chaplains, lots of Quiet Time for reflection,

recreational time, topical talks and prayer.

Donation requested: \$20.00

1-2-3 November:

UCF Retreat at Capuchin Youth Center (across the River in Garrison);  
"community-building" weekend for our new United Catholic Fellowship, activities centered on building sense of Catholic fellowship and identity among the members of this new cadet organization.  
Donation requested: \$30.

#### IS MARRIAGE IN YOUR FUTURE?

If you're planning a Catholic marriage in the near future, you'll need to have marriage instruction and preparation. Consider attending the next "Engaged Encounter (16-17 November).  
Please contact the Chaplain's Office for information.

#### DID YOU KNOW?

SEPTEMBER (which is about to end) is a big month for patron-saints of military-types and branches. In many cases, soldiers have held particular saints in veneration for centuries.

You might fit into one of the categories listed below:

SEPTEMBER 21 is the Feast of ST. MATTHEW. According to Scripture, specifically Matthew 9:9-13, MATTHEW was a tax-collector before he became one of Jesus' followers. Nothing definite is known about him except what the Gospel-story says. Legends from the early Church claim that his early ministry was in Judea and that he later went to Persia, Parthia and Ethiopia. MATTHEW has always been revered as a martyr, and in Church art, he's depicted with a spear in his hand (denoting the way he died). In the Western Church, his Feast is on 21 September; in the Eastern Church, his feast is celebrated on 16 November.

MATTHEW is the patron of the FINANCE CORPS.

SEPTEMBER 22 is the feast of ST. MAURICE OF AGAUNUM. MAURICE was a Roman soldier, a member of the Theban Legion of the Emperor Maximian's army (AD 280 or so). This Legion was composed of Christians from Upper Egypt. He and his fellow-soldiers refused to sacrifice to the gods, as ordered by the Emperor, and they withdrew from the Roman Army. As a result, the entire Legion (over 6000 soldiers) was put to death. The story was preserved by St. Eucherius, who became bishop of Lyons in France around AD 430.

MAURICE is the patron of CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS.

SEPTEMBER 26 is the Feast of SAINTS COSMAS AND DAMIEN. Nothing certain is known about these men. According to legend, they left their native

Arabia to practice medicine. Supposedly, they were exemplary Christians who died in Syria during the persecution of Diocletian in AD 303. As early as the early-500s, a church was erected at their burial place, and churches were built in their honor at Rome and at Constantinople at roughly the same time. They have always been the patrons of physicians (along with St. Luke).

COSMAS AND DAMIEN are the patrons of  
ARMY MEDICAL SPECIALISTS and the CHEMICAL CORPS.

SEPTEMBER 29 (this coming Sunday) is the Feast of the Archangels MICHAEL and RAPHAEL. In the Bible, angels are God's messengers. The word "archangel" has been used over the centuries to denote "special" messengers. So you can find both MICHAEL and GABRIEL in the pages of the Bible, performing unique and dramatic functions. MICHAEL (the name means "Who is like God?" in Hebrew) appears in the prophet Daniel as the tutelary protector of Israel. In the New Testament, he's mentioned in the Letter of Jude (verse 9), but in a more well-known story, he also appears in the Book of Revelation as the leader of the heavenly armies that cast Satan out of heaven (Revelation 12:7-9). In the Eastern Church, MICHAEL was venerated as having care of the sick, and churches dedicated to him can be found as early as the AD 300s.

GABRIEL means "hero of God" in Hebrew, and he appears four times in the Bible: Daniel 8:16 and 9:21; Luke 1:19 and 26. In Daniel, he is the angel sent to explain to Daniel the meaning of his visions, and in Luke, he is sent to Zachary and to the Virgin Mary. To Zachary, he makes known the fact that he and Elizabeth will be the parents of John the Baptist, and to the Virgin Mary, he announces the coming birth of Jesus. In Jewish legend, he is one of the four angels who stand at God's throne, and he was also the destroyer of Sodom. In Islamic literature, he is the one who revealed the Koran (Q'uran) to Muhammed.

MICHAEL is the patron of SPECIAL FORCES  
and AIRBORNE.

GABRIEL is the patron of SIGNAL CORPS.

#### PLEASE REMEMBER IN YOUR PRAYERS

...any cadet who's carrying a heavy burden this week.

...any cadet in the hospital.

...all our military brothers and sisters - and their families - throughout the world,  
especially those in areas of risk.

#### GOT A QUESTION?

Q: Father, in going to Religious Ed as a child, I learned that we believe that God is immutable. I know that the word means "unchanging", but could you expand on it a bit?

A: What a great word: IMMUTABILITY!

And you're right: it means "unchangeable".

It was a favorite word in the patristic Era of Christianity ("patristic" means "the age of the Church Fathers" - from about 50 AD to 700 AD).

And when you apply the word to God, it means that God is not subject to the limitations of created things, like "coming into being", "going out of being", "death" and "moral change". God is completely changeless and unchangeable...and thus completely different from the changing things of human experience.

Basically, the early Church Fathers used the word when they were trying to understand how the Second Person of the Trinity remained UNCHANGEABLE as God...while at the same time taking on the CHANGEABLE nature of Jesus of Nazareth.

After a couple centuries of debate, the Church finally decided that even though we humans might not understand it, Jesus of Nazareth possessed two NATURES: the nature of God (unchangeable) and the nature of a human being (changeable)...and these two natures were combined in one person: Jesus, the Christ.

How these two natures interacted has been the source of lots of theological speculation over the centuries ("Did Jesus know he was going to rise again before it happened?" ... "Did Jesus know his future, and if he did, doesn't that violate what a 'true' human nature is...but if he didn't, how can you say that he's 'God-in-the-flesh' because God knows everything?")...

This is called "speculative theology" ...because Scripture doesn't give a complete answer to the question.

Anyway, God's IMMUTABILITY has always been considered one of God's characteristics, just as MUTABILITY has always been considered the basic characteristic of humans.

Basically, we change...and we do it all the time...

And it's not just a matter of "growth", or "death" or "corruptibility" that's involved here. These are pretty obvious.

It's also a matter of distinguishing between the MUTABILITY that's good...and the MUTABILITY that isn't.

One of the Church Fathers (St. Gregory of Nyssa, d. 394) wrote that human MUTABILITY has its bad side and its good side. The bad side would be in the fact that human life is unstable, and human beings have to cope with the instability. This produces tension and trauma for humans at every step of the journey of life.

But the good side would be that because we're MUTABLE, we're able to improve...we're not stuck in one groove forever. It's the reality on which REDEMPTION is built.

So, a discussion about IMMUTABILITY gives an insight into the realities of God's nature and also human nature...into the realities behind "change" ...and it better helps us to understand the lives we lead.

It also helps us to understand that our physical life is interrelated with our spiritual life.

And of course, this is what RELIGION is all about: the constant quest to know God and to know self and everything entailed in that quest.

#### THEOLOGY EVERY CATHOLIC SHOULD KNOW:

(Note: over the next several weeks, this space will be devoted to a discussion of one of the Ten Commandments)

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT: "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shall you labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; on it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your manservant or your maidservant, or your cattle, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days, the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and on the seventh day, he rested. Therefore, the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it."

Exodus 20:8-11

The sacred nature of the sabbath is attested to elsewhere in Exodus:

"The seventh day is a sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord."

Exodus 31:15

Scripture also reveals the sabbath to be a memorial of Israel's liberation from bondage in Egypt:

"You shall remember that you were servants in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day."

Deuteronomy 5:15

God entrusted the sabbath to Israel to keep as a sign of the irrevocable covenant:

"So shall the Israelites observe the sabbath, keeping it through their generations as a perpetual covenant."

Exodus 31:16

Lastly, humans keep a "sabbath" because in the very first chapters of the Old Testament, God did it. Everyone - especially the poor - should have the opportunity to be refreshed:

"For six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day, you must rest, so that your ox and your ass may also

have rest, and that the son of your  
maidservant and the alien may be  
refreshed."

Exodus 23:12

So, the purpose of the sabbath among the Jewish people was a combination of respect for the creator, a remembrance of liberation, a sign of the bond between them and God and also a day of protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.

And Jesus kept the sabbath and respected the holiness of the day, although he often offended the legalists in his audience, who resented his healings on the sabbath:

"If a man can receive circumcision  
on the sabbath...are you angry with me  
because I made a whole person well  
on the sabbath?"

John 7:23

Jesus understood that

"...the sabbath was made for man,  
not man for the sabbath. That is  
why the Son of Man is lord even  
of the sabbath."

Mark 2:27-8

Understanding all this development, the early Christians also understood that their belief was different from the old Jewish observance. One of the early Christian writers put it this way:

"Those who lived according to the  
OLD order of things have come to  
a NEW hope, no longer keeping  
the sabbath, but the Lord's Day,  
in which our life is blessed by him  
and his death."

St. Ignatius of Antioch  
Epistula ad Magnesios 9,1

And another one put it this way:

"We all gather on the day of the sun,  
for it is the first day (after the Jewish  
sabbath, but also the first day) when  
God, separating matter from darkness,  
made the world; and on this same day,  
Jesus Christ our Savior rose from the dead."

St. Justin  
I Apologia 67

So then, the early Christians changed the day itself and added a new dimension to the significance. They kept the Jewish ideal: respect for the creator, sense of liberation and covenant as well as a protest against the servitude of work and the worship of money.

And they added the immense reality of the Resurrection of Jesus to this picture.  
They celebrated it by gathering as a body to celebrate the Resurrection:

"You cannot pray at home as at church,  
where there is a great multitude, where  
exclamations are cried out to God as from  
one great heart, and where there is something  
more: the union of minds, the accord of  
souls, the bond of charity, the prayers of the  
priests."

St. John Chrysostom  
De incomprehensibile 3,6

With all this tradition, the Catholic interpretation of the Third Commandment has  
emphasized the following:

- a) the need to worship God on Sunday together with fellow-believers  
(in Catholic tradition, this community of fellow-believers is the  
local parish); Sunday is the foremost holyday of obligation;
- b) in keeping with the tradition of the apostolic Christians, this "worship"  
always takes the form of Mass;
- c) missing Mass on Sundays for no good reason is always regarded as a serious  
omission from one's spiritual life AND a lessening of the vitality  
of the spiritual life of the local community (parish);
- d) on Sundays, Catholics are bound to abstain from those labors and business  
concerns which impede worship or which hinder the joy which is proper  
to the Lord's Day or the proper relaxation of the body;
- e) the institution of Sunday allows all to be allowed sufficient rest and leisure  
to cultivate their familial, cultural, social and religious lives;
- f) every Christian should avoid making unnecessary demands on others  
that would hinder them from observing the Lord's Day.

#### UNSOLICITED SPIRITUAL THOUGHT FOR THE WEEK:

"Someday,  
after mastering the winds, the waves,  
the tides and gravity...  
we shall harness for God  
the energies of LOVE.  
And then,  
for the second time  
in the history of the world...  
man will have discovered FIRE."

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

And that's the way it is, a day like all days, filled with those events that alter and illuminate our time...

and YOU ARE THERE!!

That's all for now.

Write me with comments, concerns, questions, threats,  
animadversions, expostulations, speeches and rogations.

You're always in my prayers,  
and I hope you'll let me know  
if I can ever be of assistance in any way.

God bless all your efforts.

Woodie